

EXPOSURE VISIT OF ULAMA FROM KPK

INTRODUCTION

The National Research and Development Foundation (NRDF) is a non-profit, non-discriminatory, and participatory NGO working successfully with religious institutions on a unique model of “Ulama and Development”. Initially working in four districts of KPK has gained so much popularity that now it is in the process of replicating this model all over the Pakistan. The model has been successful for all the development themes. Since its inception in 1993, NRDF is busy running a series of programs aiming at involvement of the religious institutions (Ulama, Madaris and mosques) in the main stream of development. Over the years it has succeeded in establishment of a network of moderate religious personalities and institutions supporting the process of social transformation and strengthening of civil society in the country). The emphasis was laid on bridging the gap between the Muslims and the West. Besides, these meetings current situation of social development, role of religious clerics, Ulama, and religious scholars concerning their role to promote modernization, family welfare, rights of women, family health, gender equality, good governance, education, population etc was also focused on.

Background

NRDF continued to interact with the representatives of religio-political groups belonging to different school of thoughts including the members of the MMA, a religio-political party which won majority in the provincial elections and formed government in the KPK. Many of the elected members are new in the politics and some have, before their election, not even visited Islamabad, the capital of the country. The NRDF invited a group of these new members of the Provincial Assembly for three days exposure visit to organizations like US-Aid, British Council, Catholic Relief Services, the Asia Foundation, Swiss Development Corporation, GTZ, Norwegian Agency for Development, Rural Social Development Program, Trust for Voluntary Organizations, United Nations Funds for Population etc. in Islamabad. The visit was scheduled to take place in April 2003, however, due to the crisis in Iraq, the religio-political parties took a stand against the West especially the US and the UK. As a result the visit was postponed and was scheduled in the second week of July 2003 for which nomination of Provincial Members of Parliament belonging to religio-political parties and minorities group was confirmed.

Existing Ulama Scenario

Shortcomings

Positive

NRDF Role

Components

- Awareness Raising

- Networking
- Research
- Capacity Bldg

2. BACKGROUND

a) Importance of Religious Institutions

The traditional religious institutions of Madaris, Mosques and Ulama (Muslim clerics) have a strong influence in the Muslims society of Pakistan particularly in the KPK, bordering Afghanistan. They are important stakeholders of the civil society. Their numerical strength, potential to influence general public, acceptability among the communities, the proximity of contact with the people at the grass roots level, various religious services these institutions are rendering, their monopoly over the interpretation of Islamic teachings and the enormous resources available to them make them a very fit mean for supporting the process of social transformation in the country. However, no organized and continuous effort has ever been made to bring them into the mainstream of development and to tap their potential for developmental activities in the country.

It proved as a viable way to mitigate the severity and intensity of “Taliban” phenomenon, promoting religious freedom, enhance the capacity of religious institutions to effectively work for upgrading the status of women, promote human rights, peace, tolerance, democratic principles, female education, good governance, family welfare and environmental rehabilitation and strengthening civil society in this dangerous region facing wars and armed conflicts. The Asia Foundation, Democracy Small Grant Program of the US government, UNICEF, Catholic Relief Services, Pakistan, IUCN, Heinrich-Boll-Foundation, GTZ, University of Peshawar, private institutions and local communities provided funds to finance the initiative.

b) Effects of non-participation of Religious Institutions

Non-Participation of Religious Institutions in Developmental Efforts: Non-participation of religious institutions into the developmental efforts in Pakistan is a key issue that has far reaching effects on the society. These can be categorized in the following ways.

- 1) Low Level of Socio-economic Development
- 2) Increase in Fundamentalism, Extremism, Sectarianism and Terrorism
- 3) Increasing Hatred against Non-Muslims/Negative Effects on Interfaith Harmony
- 4) Increasing Threats to the Civil Society

- 5) Proliferation of Madaris Educational System
- 6) Sectarianism and Human Rights Violation

Aim

One of the components i.e Capacity building, of the project is to build the capacity of Ulama to enable them for taking active part in the social development of the people. An activity of this component is to expose the development activities and programs of different agencies and institutions to the Ulama through a visit.

Purpose of the Visit

The purpose of the visit was to broaden the outlook of the Ulama by facilitating them to observe, experience and understand the concept, needs, ways and means of development as well as providing them an opportunity to exchange views with professional staff of various agencies, and institutions.

Objectives of the Visit

From Urdu Doc

The Category of the Participants

The category of Ulama includes Politico-religious parties' members, Aima and Khutaba of mosques, teachers of Madaris and religious scholars. Those who had graduated from Madaris have got little exposure to information on changes and developments on global level. Many of them are unaware of the efforts and programs being undertaken by various national and international agencies and institutions for the development of the people of Pakistan.

For this particular visit the members of the politico-religious party MMU, KPK Government were ear marked with the above-mentioned criteria in mind.

List of Participants

Twenty-Four politico religious parties members (all Members Provincial Assembly) from MMU government, KPK attended the visit. The list of the MPAs is attached as **annex 1** to this report.

Schedule

Since many agencies and institutions were involved, therefore, a tentative schedule was proposed to all the agencies for confirmation. It was confirmed by all the agencies and was finalized. The final schedule of the visit, which was followed, is attached as **annex 2**.

The Visits

The details of the activities carried out during the 3-day visit are as under:

Day 1

Tuesday, July 08, 2002

Visit 1: GTZ

The visit to the GTZ was skipped due to a number of reasons, a few of which are stated in the lines to come. The participants were detailed at the eleventh hour on the day of departure from Peshawar due their exigencies of services and sessions of the assembly. Hence the contingent moved from Peshawar very late and reached Islamabad at night. There was hardly any time for the briefing of the participants and stating of the objective of the visit and code of conduct during the visit. Hence this time was utilized for the purpose and certain queries and doubts of the participants were clarified.

Visit 2: CRS (Catholic Relief Services)

Conducted by: Deputy Director James Jhon
Dr. Syed Amir Reza
Ms Jennifer
Mr. Gul Wali

Minutes of the visit:

CRS staff carried out a warm welcome followed by recitation from the Holy Koran. Dr. Syed Amir Reza gave a detailed introduction of the organization, which included that:

- CRS was founded in 1943
- Working in 88 Countries including 21 Muslim countries
- It started its work from partition of Indo-Pak onwards
- CRS started its work formerly in Pakistan in 1954
- Its first partner in Pakistan was then Pak Red Cross
- In 1977, it worked for the Afghan Refugees
- In 1981, it was again involved in provision of Medical stores and Technical assistance in Afghan Crisis
- In 1997-98, it worked in collaboration with European Union for Food Security Program and Child Health
- Presently, It is working all over the country in three main fields namely:
 - Peace Building
 - HIV Aids

- Emergency Response

Question Answer Session:

Visit 3: RSDP

Day 2

Wednesday, July 09, 2002

Visit 1: SDC

Visit 2: UNFPA

Visit 3: TVO

Visit 4: BHC

Day 3

Thursday, July 10, 2002

Visit 1: US-AID

Visit 2: NORAD

Visit 3: TAF

The exposure visit proved to be a milestone in reciprocating cultural information, exchange of views and building up trust.

Outcome

a. Own

b. Org

c. Participants

Lessons Learnt

We will be very much grateful if you please confirm to facilitate the visit of the Ulama as per following program: